Second Language Development with an Intercultural Approach: A Pilot Program Applied to Higher Education Students from a Escuela Normal in Atequiza, Mexico

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Abstract—The importance of developing multi-language abilities in our global society is noteworthy. However, the necessity, interest, and consciousness of the significance that the development of another language represents, apart from the mother tongue, is not always the same in all contexts as it is in multicultural communities, especially in rural higher education institutions immersed in small communities. Leading opportunities for digital interaction among learners from Mexico and abroad partners represents scaffolding towards, not only language skills development but also intercultural communicative competences (ICC). This study leads us to consider what should be the best approach to work while applying a program of ICC integrated into the practice of EFL. While analyzing the roots of the language, it is possible to obtain the main objective of learning another language, to communicate with a functional purpose, as well as attaching social practices to the learning process, giving a result of functionality and significance to the target language. Hence, the collateral impact that collaborative learning leads to, aims to contribute to a better global understanding as well as a means of self and other cultural awareness through intercultural communication. While communicating through the target language by online collaboration among students in platforms of long-distance communication, language is used as a tool of interaction to broaden students' perspectives reaching a substantial improvement with the help of their differences. This process should consider the application of the target language in the inquiry of sociocultural information, expecting the learners to integrate communicative skills to handle cultural differentiation at the same time they apply the knowledge of their target language in a real scenario of communication, despite being through virtual resources.

Keywords—Collaborative learning, English as a Foreign language, intercultural communication, intercultural communicative competences, virtual partnership.

I. INTRODUCTION

INTERCULTURAL teaching is correlated with the teaching of languages. Language is communication, culture and interaction. Intercultural communication, a term coined by Hall, is understood as the communication through interaction and interchange of information across different cultures, especially with a difference that represents a communicative challenge [1]. Based on these views, one of the main differences people could face while integrating themselves to global communities is language, considering English as one of the main languages to communicate internationally, people who are developing it as a second language could find the use of it as a key tool to expand their opportunities for communications and growth. Due to this fact, English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers should be aware of the enormous commitment we have in order to expose our learners to new perspectives and different realities than their own context. The idea of the interrelation between culture and foreign language education has been an aspect supported by many scholars [2]-[9].

Dunnett et al. [3] point out the arduousness of convincing the language teachers that teaching culture is as important as the development of the four language skills. The goals of teaching culture within the English teaching curriculum worldwide are three-fold: from the political perspective, it attempts the promotion of international understanding and world peace. From the educational point of view, is to increase learners' intellectual and humanistic development. Finally, regarding the ideological purpose, it is used in immigration contexts, when the aim is to help newcomers to a process of assimilation and acculturation in the new society [5].

This pilot program was aimed to develop awareness of self-culture along with others as well as to broaden students' minds and offer them opportunities to contact different realities to their own, in order to enrich their perspectives and their reference universe [10]. Considering the enormous integration to the second language approach, it would attempt to reinforce the use of the language as a secondary goal, being a reinforcement project to EFL lessons. In this means, English will act as the tool of communication, while focusing on the pragmatic function of the linguistics, placing the student in an "authentic" necessity of communication in the target language [11].

II. NECESSITY OF DEVELOPING AN INTERCULTURAL APPROACH IN TARGET LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The importance of developing ICC in our current society leads us to reflect on how linked it is to education, especially in communities where there are no high demands for internationalization in education, and the exposure to cultural

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diversity is minimum in students' backgrounds, more specifically in rural contexts.

This pilot program was carried out in the Escuela Normal Rural Miguel Hidalgo (ENRMH) in Jalisco México, which is one of the 18 Escuelas Normales Rurales in Mexico. These types of institutions are advocated to the training of future teachers of Elementary and Early Childhood Education, to contribute to the society in rural contexts. Most of the students in the Normal Rural come from rural communities and from families with low incomes. In these institutions students are offered free education, plus they get accommodation and expense scholarships during their studies. The main vision of the creation of this type of schools follows the interest in spreading free education to all the communities, regardless of their possibilities.

Considering the aspects mentioned before, the learner's environment plays a key role in their learning process, especially if we attempt the development of a second language, in this case English. We, the English professors of this college, have faced the challenge of the lack of interest in the development of EFL from most of the students since our first interactions in 2018 [12]. By not having a real necessity of English interaction in their social environments they see the practice of the language as something useless and disconnected with their reality.

Considering the background's characteristics in which the students of the ENRMH live led us to reflect on the input and opportunities they have in their immediate context, not only regarding the use of English, but also the necessity of mindset broadening. As a collateral result, this would encourage them to acquire a higher interest in the use of the second language and deeper reflections on the cultural diversity they generally do not have access to in their own environments.

Based on the idea that ICC eludes the process of interaction between people from different cultures, these competences result necessary based on students' lack of interest in English as a second language as well as its root the low level of connection with sociocultural diversity in their immediate context.

III. VIRTUAL INTERCHANGE APPROACH IN TARGET LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: DEVELOPMENT OF THE PILOT PROGRAM

The main aim of the strategic program *Second Language Development with an Intercultural Approach* is to promote in the learner the social practice of the English language by means of bilingual intercultural exchanges throughout virtual means to develop ICC which amplify their vision about the world from the approach to realities different from their own.

Considering the points reflected previously, it is possible to remark the intention of implementing a strategy to enrich students' experiences in regards to cultural diversity, to encourage their motivation in the use of EFL, while developing their English language skills. This strategy was designed as an elective program, complementary to the EFL course called Second Language Development with an Intercultural Approach, and it was offered to all students taking the EFL course. The idea of the program was basically to offer them a link to a pen pal partner by means of collaboration among institutions through virtual networks, where the aim was to encourage students' awareness of other cultures throughout reflexive analysis exercises. These interactions were expected to develop a real necessity of communication through the use of the target language.

Intercultural learning based experience on computer-enhanced intercultural communication seems to be a natural occurrence, which additionally helps learners realize the mutual bonds between language and culture [13]. This complementary program was designed to be developed during four months, attempting to offer a change of partners once this period finishes so as to allow the students more opportunities of relations and diversity knowledge.

The merit of computer-mediated intercultural learning lies in the fact that learners not only have the possibility to use the computer to discover foreign cultures, but also they can take advantage of it as the web is used not only to obtain but also transmit information, they can learn how to demonstrate their own culture to others [13]. As a result, participants would acquire a sense of acculturation at the same time they develop their own identity and self-culture awareness.

The program raised attempts to the development of ICC in students which entails the establishment of punctual objectives to achieve in this process, these competencies are linked to the achievement of the Byram's *saviors* referred in [2] and they consist in five competencies developed considering the combination of valuable skills and knowledge necessary for the acquisition of an intercultural learning. These are specified as follows:

1. Knowledge of self and other: of how interaction occurs; among the relationship of the individual and the global society.
2. Knowing how to interpret and relate information.
3. Knowing how to engage with the political consequences of education: being critically aware of cultural behaviours.
4. Knowing how to discover cultural information.
5. Knowing how to be: how to relativize oneself and value the attitudes and beliefs of the other.

The aim of this process of *saviors* acquisition is to let students reflect upon the cultural behaviour targeted, once being aware of the expected goals they may benefit from being permitted to integrate their own interests into their process of learning and intercultural relationship.

The work process in the program *Second Language Development with an Intercultural Approach* demands the application of the guidance phases during the first week of work with the participants, in order to contextualize the students in the correct experiential learning cycle of Kolb [14], Fig. 1.

Once the students are aware of the process of inner observation and analysis of the experiences of interaction exposed in Fig. 1, as well as getting their prior ideas about intercultural exchanges it is important to highlight that the richness of the project depends on the level of accomplishment

and analysis of the own and the partner's background in order to reach deeper reflections and as consequence apply what was learnt in their real context.
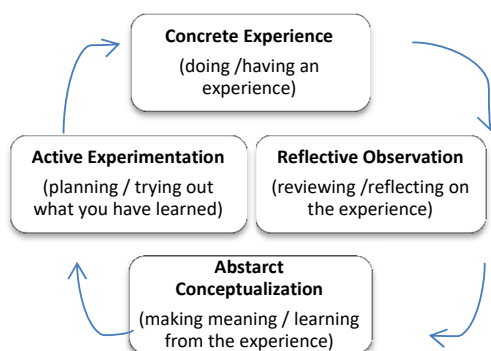

Fig. 1 Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

Based on the aims of the course, ergo the *saviors* which are the competences mentioned previously, it is possible to separate the different stages of the interactive process based on their achievement attempting to develop diverse reflective and analytic tasks in order to reinforce each *savior* (see Table I). Each activity, aimed to contribute to the development of the ICC is endorsed by scholars supporting the Intercultural approach as means of reflection and analysis of the interactive process [2], [15]-[19].

TABLE I
PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TASKS

Stage	Savior	Activities
1	Knowledge of self and other	- Prior experiences and interests in the development of EFL with a communicative approach. - Information gap: first interactions with the partner, interviews. - Multicultural interaction analysis.
2	Knowing how to discover cultural information	- Reflexive essay: experience, challenges, interests and remarkable aspects in the first approach of intercultural interaction. - Goal setting: Scope based on the interests of the learner in the other's culture. - Getting acquainted: cultural interview. - Differences in culture: ethnographic report.
3	Knowing how to be	- Tolerance to diversity survey and self-assessment. - Cultural associations, cultural information comparison. - Reflexive essay, identification of oneself with one's own culture. - Cross-cultural analysis: appreciation of attitudes, knowledge and beliefs of the partner's culture.
4	Knowing how to engage with the political consequences of education	- Analysis and differentiation of experiences and professional backgrounds: Collaborative board. - Critical interpretation and cultural differentiation from the ethnographic research. - Opinion forums and debate groups: differences in culture, reality and possible improvements.
5	Knowing how to interpret and relate information	- Hindsight learning analysis: Development, Reflection and Evaluation. - Ethnographic report and analytic essay of the process of intercultural interchange. - Portfolio, self-evaluation and analysis of the results.

This pilot program was designed to be developed throughout technological learning environments, making use of virtual resources like Google Classroom, Google Suite tools and online canvas to elaborate the different reflexive analytic tasks and collaborative forums among the participantsx.

IV. SETTING IN MOTION SECOND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT WITH AN INTERCULTURAL APPROACH PROGRAM

Once the major components of the plan were defined, the first step in the application of the strategy consisted of a call for participants during February 2020, which was offered to the students of the institution, as well as to English speaking universities looking for participants attracted by the intercultural experience. Based on this, in the first instance the project was expected to be an interchange of languages English-Spanish. However, it was found that due to increased numbers of immigrants, English speaking countries are currently living the interculturalization of their educational system. Therefore, they do not have the necessity to expose their students to different cultures apart from the classroom and their context; rather they need to reinforce diversity and integration in their multicultural environments. Considering this situation, in March 2020 it was necessary to make a slight modification in the networking aspect of the project plan, so that ENRMH interested students could continue with the strategy of acculturation. An option for students' interactive exchange was throughout the mobile application HelloTalk which consists of a platform that offers different options for people of diverse nationalities around the globe, who are also interested in the interchange of text messages, audios and pictures to reinforce the target language with an approach of language interchange.

Once the construction of the program *Second Language Development with an intercultural Approach* was completed as well as the alternative means of linking interaction through the HelloTalk application, the participant students were invited to introductory sessions to inform them about the objective and methodology of the program, so they could be aware of the process of inner observation and analysis of the experiences of interaction. During these sessions the guider exposed the main characteristics of the program as well as the invitation to the interactive linking among students and the app's users. The introductory sessions took place in the institution arranging three sessions in total per three groups of ten students each one, being a total of 30 participant students in the pilot program.

Learners were advised to communicate with foreigners of any country who were mastering the English language by developing individual interactions through the mobile application and were encouraged to keep regular communicative exchanges, attempting the natural communication of the target language in terms of intercultural interchange. Since ICC are best acquired through actual practice, regular conversational topics were about daily tasks, emphasizing on their own identity and awareness of cultural characteristics based on similarity and differences in comparable patterns of culture [6].

Throughout the development of the project, students should

develop communicative interactions related to their own interests and experiences in order to keep the approach of social practice of the language in its more authentic version. Reid [20] shows the fundamentals of culture and intercultural communication in which some of the most fundamental components necessary for development of ICC are mentioned. Among these ones are sociocultural knowledge (everyday living, living conditions, interpersonal relations, history, values, beliefs, taboos, social conventions, ritual behaviour), sociolinguistic competences (greetings, addressing, dialect, accent, register, positive and negative politeness, idioms, etc.), pragmatic competences (advising, persuading, urging, socializing, interaction patterns) and non-verbal communication (body language, gestures, eye contact, proxemics, etc.).

Apart from the natural interactions with one or multiple partners, students were requested to carry out interviews to collect information about their partners, and practice their pronunciation on a regular basis, attempting to get co-evaluation of their progress through the constant feedback of the users as well as the practice of the target language, the whole interface allows participants an easy and practical experience of collaborative learning.

During the first month of work, despite the fact that students were able to work at their own pace of interaction as well as having independent opportunities for linking; the use of the application HelloTalk as only tool of interaction did not fulfil the needs of the program, considering the lack of formality in committed interactions from the partners that could be contacted through the app. Therefore it provoked a barrier to achieve the objective of the program, since more than the 60% of the group of participants expressed dissatisfaction and frustration towards the low frequency of communication with the partners contacted by the application, from which eventually only 50% continued in the project. With this result, the important correlation there is between intercultural exchanges and willingness of participation is palpable. Due to this hindrance, it was necessary to look for different links of exchange, especially one endorsed and supported through an institutionalized network as it was planned since the beginning, in order to establish exchanges with more committed partners coached by a tutor in a similar way than this program was proposed.

Considering the difference in intercultural approach interests identified in the targeted countries of interchange at the beginning, it was necessary to look for interested professors in participating in an interchange partnership, with a more similar approach to the one we were looking for. Advantageously, it was possible to establish nets of collaboration with institutions interested in developing EFL from non-English speaking countries, which were attracted by the exposure of intercultural experiences by virtual means. Hence the program modality was modified according to the offered options, in which instead of interchanging languages; both students would be expected to practice the target language while maintaining the objective of developing intercultural competences.

Throughout the networking actions at the middle of the program's scheduled period, it was possible to link the higher education students of ENRMH with partners from Yonsei University, in South Korea. The EFL professor at this university integrated 42 of his students to the program, hence it was necessary to invite more students from our institution to participate, in addition to the participants who were enrolled initially in the program and wanted to switch to a more committed partner, which were about 25% of the total students enrolled in the complementary program at the beginning. The rest of the students to complete this group were selected this time not by students' own will but by adding a complete group of the course of EFL, taking into consideration the number of students there are in this group, as well as its characteristics of enthusiasm and commitment to their studies.

At the end of April 2020, it was possible to see the development of the pilot program in three variants of methodology:

A. Virtual Intercultural Communication through Mobile Application HelloTalk Guided by the Reflexive Tasks of the Strategic Program Second Language Development with an Intercultural Approach

Despite the hindrances mentioned before, about 50% of the total participants who remained participating in the program continued working with the application. Through their evidence work developed in the reflexive tasks during the implementation of the program, students were able to carry interaction analysis with committed partners emigrating eventually to different means of communication, like WhatsApp messages.

All of the students surveyed mentioned the efficiency of the app as a tool to meet different people, as well as the opportunity to get instant feedback from native speakers. Notwithstanding, the frequency of interactions with a single partner still represented a drawback in the pathway to reach suitable interactions, alongside the lack of commitment in looking for other possible peers to exchange information. Not having access to the students' process of interaction coupled with the fact that their partners interests' were to interact in something momentary and not following objectives as specific as in this project, led the participants to interact with diverse partners, as long as they had the commitment to find them, in order to carry out the interaction process. Consequently, these students had the opportunity to encounter more diverse partnerships from different nationalities, languages and ages, in a more superficial interaction though. Additionally, in the survey they were asked to ponder the factors they considered at the time of establishing an interaction in aims of intercultural interchange. Students pointed to their most remarkable need to find partners with their own interest in the intercultural exchange, committed with the partnership interchange. Aspects like gender, sex, similarity in interests or professional line were not as relevant as the significance they give to interest in this type of interaction.

B. Virtual Intercultural Communication through Institutional Collaborations as a Complement to the English Language Course Curricula

The development of this partnership linking was evolved and guided by the professors of both Yonsei and ENRMH Universities, linking each of our students with a partner from the opposed institution. The exchanges consisted of spaces for pen pal interchange through online intercultural exchange with delimited activities arranged and planned in collaboration with the professors involved. These activities were aimed to approach the different skills of the target language: oral and listening skills by online video calls, audios, videos, etc.; parallel to the development of pair exchange interactions while developing reading and writing skills by sharing texts, messages, presentations, etc. Working in this modality implied the consideration of these intercultural exchanges as evidence of productive skills of the target language, for this reason it was important to define the means of communication among students, in order to let the guiders supervise their process and reinforce the guidance in the project.

The use of internet based tools was an essential aspect for this approach, since working in collaboration with abroad institutions demands technological means of interaction. Systems like Google Drive incorporate online office programs that allow users to access stored files or folders representing a useful tool for students and teachers during collaborative learning [21]. Therefore, the chosen option for establishing the logistics of interaction among pairs was through predefined Google Docs, shared by each pair as well as their professors, in order to observe their interaction process. The use of Google Drive folders and files let the participants have a better and more efficient organization and collaboration on their evidence while interacting with abroad partners. Nevertheless, there was some confusion at the beginning, especially for those students who had to get used to checking the Google Doc regularly, since it does not send notifications once the document has been edited. In this aspect, the professors played an essential role in this stage of interaction, promoting the fluent communication among students as well as positive attitudes in the interaction.

The establishment of collaboration agreements among universities or educational institutions in the development of intercultural communication programs with a virtual interchange approach resulted in a more enriching interchange in comparison to the mobile application used previously as a linking tool, due to several aspects that promoted a better communication and interaction among participants. The positive results found in this institutional collaboration are listed below.

The first one, and probably the main one, is the commitment among participants, since partners form both sides could be encouraged by their professor or advisor, in order to increase their interest in learning through intercultural exchanges while diminishing the negligence and abandonment of the engagement in the paired exchanges. The speakers' willingness and motivation come as the main difference between a multicultural and intercultural act. While the multicultural exchange is a passive action, the intercultural process suggests active cooperation between people [22].

Another aspect considered in supervising this type of collaborative projects is the role we have as guides while focusing learners on the objective of the project, this means fostering the development of ICC related to social competencies. Henceforth, being a wider educational project, this approach has explicit ethical implications that we, as guides, need to point out during the process. Attempting the development there are certain attributes commonly related to intercultural speakers needed to be endorsed in intercultural exchanges, some of which are respect, empathy, flexibility, patience, interest, curiosity, openness, motivation, a sense of humour, tolerance for ambiguity, and a willingness to suspend judgement [23].

Byram [2] points out the curricular attitudes considered to promote alongside the intercultural exchange:
- Willingness to seek out or take opportunities to engage with otherness in a relationship of equality.
- Interest in discovering other perspectives on interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena in both cultural practices.
- Willingness to question the values and presuppositions in cultural practices in one's own environment.
- Readiness to experience the different stages of adaptation to and interaction with another culture.

The advisors of both institutions encouraged the participants in adopting this kind of attitude during their intercultural interactions, maintaining a formative guidance towards an emphatic attitude to the other's process and differences. However, this approach adopted more relevance in regards to the development of EFL skills among some of the learners who were not introduced to the strategic program Second Language Development with an intercultural approach initially. Nevertheless, the sense of intercultural curiosity and acculturation process was approached by natural means, being evident in their Google Doc interactions. This approach gave palpable evidence of the mind broadening reactions of the students, in the whole communicative process, including the interchange of cultural references to support the redaction of their reality like images and videos by the Google Docs. Moreover, the video call arranged by themselves alongside with their peers represented a cultural shock for most of them. The necessity of interaction and enthusiasm was evident, and despite the misunderstandings they could reach alternative ways to support their communication. In this sense, it is possible to point out the real use of the language, which comes along when learners find themselves in an authentic and challenging situation of interaction where the need to express their ideas is evident.

C. Virtual Intercultural Communication through Institutional Collaborations Guided by the Reflexive Tasks of the Program Second Language Development with an Intercultural Approach

Finally, the third approach obtained in this pilot program was the experiential learning process of those students

enrolled in the strategy aimed to reinforce their Intercultural Communication Competencies alongside with the practice of EFL through institutional collaboration. These students, representing half of the participants who remained in the initial project (that means 25% of the total that started), were invited to participate in the institutional partnership due to their high level of interest in the project and low success in the interaction through the HelloTalk app.

These students integrated the elements of analytical differences in reflexive essays, cross-cultural analysis, ethnographic reports, among other tasks integrated in the program, in their regular communicative approaches. Having all the elements and guidance of reflective analysis as well as the objectives of the program, permitted them the obtainment of even higher and richer reaches, attempting to deeper analysis of the interaction process with their pen pals.

The essence of the project as an authentic process of interaction was based on the students' centeredness, promoting their own autonomy in learning throughout opportunities of real communication and the use of a plethora of possible languages varieties apart from the target language integrating the role of the student as the main element in this autonomous learning process [13]. Based on this, the form of evaluation was represented by holistic and analytic assessment tools, including self-assessment analysis and reflexive and analytical texts. Marcsak [13] shows the idea that assessing intercultural skills incites mainly moral issues which are likely to arise in the course of it; hence assessment of intercultural competence is bound to be subjective. In consequence ICC would be evaluative only through observation or in the lack of it through reflective analysis. Therefore, the evidence of awareness developed by this group of students matches according to the expected competencies of the experimental program, resulting in a successful experience and a more complete experience of intercultural communication.

V. RESULTS

The pilot program of Development of a Second Language with an Intercultural Approach concluded to be enriching and interesting for all the participants. As mentioned before, it entails a high percentage of commitment from all the participants, the professors in their role as coordinators and guiders and the students in their responsibility as peers during their process of interaction, as well as in their own process of ICC and EFL skills acquisition through an autonomous learning aimed at the achievement of the development of the objectives of the program.

As mentioned before, the project was planned with the intention of opening student's minds to different realities, to provoke in them the inner necessity of communication through the use of English despite the low input in their immediate context. Considering the previous objective, it is possible to identify the enormous impact the project has achieved on the students' language performance and intercultural mindset, getting the opportunity of expressing all their enthusiasm and reciprocal curiosity in getting to know each other's traditions with the characteristics of an Intercultural encounter online.

Based on the students' interaction process as well as their evidence recollected during the complementary program of Second Language Development with an Intercultural Approach it was possible to extract valuable information about the accomplishment and possible improvement areas regarding the proposed program.

A. Program Accomplishments

The portfolios of activities' evidence generated during the program development proved out the level of achievement of the competencies established at the beginning. Among the positive elements it was possible to identify certain remarkable aspects in order to keep fostering them.

The awareness of other cultures and desire for sharing their own was one of the aspects of more interest for the students. It represented a meaningful intercultural connection with their partner, whilst at the time getting hooked on knowing more about the other's background, their thoughts and life in general. Another outcome at the same time was a stimulating reflection on cultural identity, resulting in a change of perspectives regarding cultural aspects. The process of intercultural interaction involves not only perceiving the similarities and differences in other cultures but also recognizing the givens of the native culture or, as Hall refers [1], our own "hidden culture" [19]. This process of interaction became even more significant at the time of identifying the use of the target language as a mere tool for communication, acquiring more confidence in their own communicative practice through a natural interaction in an authentic learning environment. By means of this way of practising, learners expressed their needs and abilities in the target language. This in turn, promoted in them the knowledge of their learning process and commitment in their own strategies to improve the language acquisition, ergo competent autonomous learning.

Promoting in students this type of intercultural spaces of collaboration opens up the diversity landscape in a more sensible way, hooking the learner to the multiple queries and the desire of fulfilling their intercultural curiosity. This enthusiasm during interaction has been linked with a sense of amiability, respect and empathy not only regarding the process of acquisition of the language, but also towards the cultural differences. Cultural awareness involves uncovering and understanding one's own culturally conditioned behavior and thinking, as well as the patterns of others. Linked to this point underlies a cultural, ethic, and personal growth, where the students mention the adaptation of attitudes and aptitudes identified in other cultures that allows them to be more responsible, optimist and committed with their actions [19]. Moreover, the usefulness of digital platforms is notable in this approach to interactions, permitting a continuous and efficient interaction with long distance partners. These means of internationalized communication are the path to prepare citizens linked to the word, despite the obstacles in the possibilities of studying abroad. They are getting prepared for direct interactions in multicultural environments.

B. Program Improvements

According to students' reflections and analysis of their process and the program itself, it was possible to identify aspects that could be modified, specifically in terms of logistic and functionality.

A glance around learning acquisition methods proves the necessity of feeling confident in communication, considering the four skills of the language. Based on this, it is necessary to establish more specific means of speaking interaction. Despite the requests to arrange video calls, there were times when it was challenging to coordinate connection due to the time difference between countries or in some cases the lack of internet service in certain areas where the rural students lived. Based on these aspects and the willingness for lending equality and opportunities in education, it is necessary to consider alternative or complementary tools to integrate interaction in a more efficient and complete way, aiming to be easier for the students to get notifications once they get a response in order to keep the conversation going with flexible opportunities in regards to technology. Additionally it is important to establish coordinated specific activities along with the fellow teachers at the beginning of the semester, in order to establish a more organized collaboration during the interaction period of four months, especially in determining punctual dates for the oral-listening evidence. In addition to this, a coming goal is the integration of more institutional partnerships to the program, since the interest of the students in learning is to keep interacting with more institutions of different nationalities.

Emphasizing institutional partnerships is an important factor to consider, since according to the participant's observations the integration of partners as pen pals that are not interested enough in the acquisition of intercultural experiences causes discouragement and is unhelpful to the program. Due to this, it is essential to integrate participants with personal interest in participating, once being aware of the objectives and scope of the program.

VI. Conclusion

It is essential to integrate ICC through Intercultural interchange opportunities in education, since among many things it offers a change of mindset in learners, the establishment of interactions brings a new perspective of life, an awareness of own scopes as well as a bond with others, integrating diversity and equality in the learners' lives.

EFL teachers play a fundamental role in this achievement representing the bridge to the key international language. Mckay [24] states that English as an international language needs to be taught in a culturally sensitive manner by respecting the local culture of learning. An understanding of the local culture of learning should not be based on stereotypes, or a received view of culture.

Based on this research it is remarkable the necessity to bring the opportunity of intercultural classes to our learners with reflexive and analytic scaffolding, regardless of the financial opportunities to study abroad, this is an aspect that should be offered in all the educational system. We have a huge responsibility to prepare human beings linked with the world as global citizens; giving them the necessary tools to communicate in the real world and being capable of understanding other cultural views. On the other hand, it is urgently necessary to develop means of interaction with the possibility of establishing formal likings across the globe, with partnership options of planning and efficient opportunities of interaction among the participants. The application of this type of pedagogic innovation is essential, not only for students but also for the improvement of teachers.

Bringing intercultural experiences, either long distance or face to face, reformulates one's own perspective of life and promotes the reflection and critical thinking in cultural practices. "Culture starts when you realize that you've got a problem with language and the problem has to do with who you are. Culture happened in language, but the consciousness it inspires goes well beyond it" [25].

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